

561 a whole group of age-mates may be punished for the delinquency of one of the group, but it is not strictly the same group as played together; it might be young mothers only, because one of them had insulted an old woman.

• [351] Besides the *shaga* there is the *marile*, the age-set brought into existence by the great national initiations, the *swidja* for boys and the *syali* for girls. (The word *marile* is also applied to cattle born in the same year.) But these age-sets have much less significance than in other tribes. Their chief function is to grade men and women into groups to which a distinctive name is given and by which they can readily reckon their relative ages. In the very old days the age-sets had some military function, but the queens relied less and less upon their fighting unit and to-day nothing is left of the old basis, if it was such, of the age-set. There is hardly a bond of mutual help and fellowship within the group. It does not constitute the unit that is usually called to perform communal duties for chief or tribe. This work is done by districts rather than by regiments, though it is said that in the old days there was some sort of division of labour as between the different sets, and to-day occasionally in the district of the capital the youngest age-set is called upon to weed the field of the queen. Certainly there is still the conception that each regiment is entitled to some particular portion of a beast that is slaughtered, but in practice there is no evidence of the observance of this rule. It is as if, with the breakdown of their military functions, their other attached functions also fell into disuse. What remains are the privileges attached to seniority and to age. The enclosure of the queen's *khoro* is built by men of all ages, called up by districts; this applies equally to labour on the roads, brick-making, and building. If young men are sometimes given a specific piece of work, it is primarily because they are young men or the young men of such and such a district, and never in our experience as the whole age-set in the tribe.

But the function of marking relative ages, seniority in respect of important activities in the tribe, is of very great importance. A young man who has gone through one initiation may have advanced one important stage towards adulthood, but he is still very far from being a complete man or from being initiated into the inner secrets of the 'school'. In the second initiation he becomes a shepherd (*madab*), in the third he may be one stage higher up (one of the *madidi*), and, if he is lucky, he may reach the fourth stage, that of the old men or of one of the officials of the initiation. Girls have to go through even more stages before full initiation in the puberty ceremonial. And in the *syali*, as we saw in 1939, only men who were initiated as far back as 1894 were allowed in the enclosure for men. The beer and the food and delicacies which were brought by the girl initiates were for these old men, though occasionally they relented and passed on a pot of beer to their juniors watching the proceedings from outside the enclosure. And there is a similar hierarchy in the *gumma* cult. Only gradually are men introduced to the innermost secrets; only the old men play the part of the weird whistling spirits (*swidjane*), until they become too old to play the part and are replaced by younger men.

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for as they phrase it, 'If you are ashamed of gnawing a bone, you will presently throw it away, meat and all.' Closely associated with that irritating characteristic of the Lovedu, especially Lovedu women, which the European terms shameless, unblushing beggary, is the aversion to theft. A child is told a thousand times, 'Always just ask (*hobela*) for anything you may want; never steal.' And whenever there has been a theft it is said, 'People should beg (*hobela*), not steal.' It is only when you get great differences in wealth, as when a European comes among Natives, that this custom becomes irritating. In this begging from Europeans, Natives do exceed the canons of politeness even of their own society, but many consider it of little consequence in dealings with the European, who, after all, is notoriously ill-mannered in his dealings with Natives. 867

Correct use of terms of relationship or address is not expected till after puberty and the young child, only gradually learning not to call people older than itself by their everyday names, makes many mistakes. One would think that the formal behaviour required in such complicated ceremonial as that of marriage visits would require some form of special instruction. This is, however, not the case. A young man learns these things simply by hearing others talk, while a girl, by forming part of bridal parties when others in her village are married, comes to learn what is required of her. These facts bear out what experience shows, viz. that formalities are not so rigid as one is apt to imagine. Proper respect, politeness, and correct behaviour, involving use of the right terms of address to those older than yourself, are not insisted upon till after the puberty initiation in the case of a girl and circumcision in the case of a boy. Before this you are regarded as irresponsible, without proper knowledge of how to behave, lacking judgement and that wisdom in personal relationships associated with adults. You are a *lshweore*.

It is significant, however, that, especially in the case of girls, a single ceremony is not considered sufficient to effect this great transformation to responsibility and adult status. In addition to her own puberty ceremony (*khobe*), every girl has to attend and take part in a number of subsequent puberty ceremonies in the area—six in the royal area, four of five in other areas. At the first ceremony after her own she is a *thwajana*, who sits in seclusion with the *khobe*, eats of the same food and, like her, is allowed no relish, is beaten hard and takes no part in the dancing at night. Instead, however, of having to go early each morning to the river with the initiate, she fetches water and helps with the cooking. The other *dishtwajana* are responsible for all the work: they fetch wood and water, stamp, and cook; they run errands for the elder girls who have finished their course of initiation and wait on them; they carry the drums to the river and may be made to sit in the water with the initiate. 881

In control of the ceremony are the elder girls who have been fully initiated (*dishtwajana*). They walk about with a great sense of their own importance and have to be royally entertained. It is essential that there be plenty of good food at an initiation ceremony. Mealie meal is cooked twice a day, much light beer is made, and monkey nuts and other delicacies are abundantly supplied. At one ceremony, lasting six days, a whole bag of mealie meal was consumed by the girls—that is, more than

881 twice as much as would normally be consumed by the same number of people; and in addition they had large quantities of nuts, only exceptionally provided in ordinary life. For purposes of economy, the mother of the initiate usually makes porridge for her household of the bran of the stampings of the girls. Sometimes, in times of scarcity, a girl's puberty ceremony will be postponed, and it is noticeable that in the ploughing season, when the people are busy all day in the fields, there are few or no initiation ceremonies. Though in charge of the ceremony, the elder girls are subject to an old woman, 'mother of the *khoba*', who has been chosen by the initiate herself and who, ever after, will be called 'mother' by her. For her own mother may have nothing to do with the ceremony and, even though it is held in her courtyard, may not enter the hut of seclusion. The girl's mother feels very sympathetic towards her daughter and often grumbles that the girls are 'killing' her daughter when she hears them beating her. But she has no say. If a girl is unpopular, her parents sometimes arrange for the ceremony to be held at a relative's village in another area, lest she be too badly treated.

881 The Lovedu girl does not approach her own mother about such an intimate and personal matter as her first menstruation, but confides in 841 a friend, who will inform the mother by means of the metaphorical phrase, 'So-and-so has scolded the women.' The other girls of the area are thereupon called to come and the ceremonial opens with their carrying the novice on their backs from a spot outside the village, where they have forgathered, into the hut of seclusion, usually the cooking hut of the mother. Some girls keep the fact of their menstruation hidden for months before divulging the secret. Mabula waited for three months. It will not be possible here to do more than indicate the main incidents of a girl's puberty ceremony. It must, however, be borne in mind that there is considerable variation in detail between one ceremony and another and that no mere analysis can give the atmosphere prevailing in such ceremonies. On the arrival in her hut of seclusion the girl is 'strengthened' (*ku thusa*) by the old women. Ground herbs mixed with ochre and some of the girl's own menstrual blood are smeared on various parts of the body—in a circle round the wrist, on the head, nose, mouth, neck, arms, etc. The medicine is *ya ku rrua bidzi masala* (to give the zebra its stripes) and is said to prevent the girl from becoming ill (*ku khuma*) when entering the villages of other people. That night towards sunset the women of the area forgather at the village of the initiates, trilling and shouting, 'E a luma' (it bites), on the way; they come to drum and dance, as they do almost every evening of the six days' seclusion.

881 While in seclusion the initiate and her companion sit to one side of the doorway of the hut without any covering except the loincloth. They talk in whispers only. When a stranger approaches the hut, she wails in a thin voice to warn him off (for she can see through the crevices of the doorway), and when the elder girls enter she must wail loudly lest she be beaten. When she wishes to relieve herself, she walks out completely covered in a blanket. Early each morning the initiate is taken to the river. She walks in a stooping attitude, covered in a blanket and surrounded by girls uttering a high-pitched wail as she goes. In the stream

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a hole is hollowed out so as to be deep enough for her to sit in (if possible 881 ● the water should reach the neck) while a fire is kindled for the other girls, at whose pleasure she remains in the water, uttering her wail. If the girl has a good friend among the old women, she may free the initiate from 841] going to the river after the first morning by a gift of snuff to the elder girls. This is called 'lifting the weight' from the girl (*hu rula*). They return home about eleven o'clock in the morning, when they have their meal. After this the elder girls return to their homes or do as they please, while the novice and her friend remain in their hut. They sleep if they can, for at night they get little chance to do so. During the initiation the girl undergoes harsh treatment at the hands of the older girls. She 'pays', by being beaten, for going to sleep, for waking up and on the slightest pretext. At night her blankets are taken away and used by the older girls, while she lies exposed with no fire to warm her. Not only is she allowed no relish with her porridge, but she may also be given filth to eat. One girl's menstrual blood was put in her porridge, which she immediately vomited up; sometimes a frog is given them to eat and one of us has seen initiates made to eat sand as relish. If she asks for water, the elder girls may clear the nose into it before it is given. All this harsh treatment is looked upon as good discipline.

Initiation at puberty includes instruction in rules connected with 881 the new stage of life the girl is entering upon. She is warned that she 864 has reached maturity and must be careful, in sex play with boys, to avoid becoming pregnant. She is advised also not to have more than one lover at a time, lest there be difficulty in establishing the paternity of her child should she have one. In the old days she was at this stage given a calabash doll which at her marriage was carried in a basket by the wedding party. If she was not virgin, the calabash was pierced. This custom has, however, fallen into disuse. The girl is taught the rules connected with menstruation: not to enter a sick-room while menstruating, not to enter 841] a cattle kraal, not to sleep with men during her menses. If she has not enlarged her *labia minora* properly, she is severely scolded or punished by having hot, roasted sesamum put on them. In one case the elder girls inserted a mealie cob in an initiate to show her the dangers of intercourse, hurting her so badly that she was unable to walk properly. Her parents complained to the queen, who imposed a heavy fine on each of the elder girls responsible. There is no teaching connected with marriage. An initiate must be respectful to her elders: she is told that if people older than herself are in a hut she must greet (*buha*) on entering. She is taught in a song to honour and obey her mother. Most of the teaching is in the form of songs or mummeries. The dancing that takes place every night when the women come consists largely of movements in a bent position 881 on the haunches, with arms held above the head for better balance. Some 535 of the dances are associated with the lessons of the initiation: two girls, one with a cloth passed between the legs to represent the loin covering of a man, dance facing each other; the 'man' dances with a lighted firebrand between the legs, the girl wears a cloth which makes her look pregnant. Another dance consists of movements in which legs are held close together, and sometimes crossed, symbolic of the manner in which

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male advances can be prevented from becoming dangerous. These are *digoma*, secret things or mummeries.

The last night of the ceremony is devoted to dancing and the showing of many *digoma*. It is *khilalawemi*, the night when one sleeps standing—that is, does not sleep at all, though, since people just take a nap any time they feel tired, the name is somewhat exaggerated. All the women of the area who wish to attend gather either in the village, from which men will be debarred, or at a secluded spot somewhere near, bringing with them mealies and nuts to roast and eat while there. There is a great deal of dancing and singing. The greatest *digoma* are shown at about 3 a.m., after a period of comparative quiet that sets in towards midnight, when most of the people begin to doze around the fires, and these continue until dawn, when disguised figures come dancing in. Each mummery has its own meaning, but this is not clear to the initiate, who does not even see many of them. In the morning, while the girls are at the river, the hut of seclusion is swept and freshly smeared. On her return, [302] after having her head shaved along the sides and back, leaving a circular top, which is a form of hairdress much liked by girls and associated with ritual occasions, the girl is anointed with fat and, except when she is of the royal family, also with ochre. She is given three skins to wear, a [292] frontal covering, a rear covering, and a skin to wear over the shoulders like a cloak. Round her neck is a thick collarette of beads. When dressed, the girl has respectfully to salute the assembled company of women in the courtyard by lying down on one side, palms held together. Now follows a few days during which the novice speaks to no one and walks with bent head, fists clenched and held to the breast. She is taken by the [431] elder girls to greet various relations, who must *nosa* her by means of a small gift before she can rise. A month or more after the ceremony a grand beer-party is given by the girl's parents for the women of the area, [571] who, at a spot near which men are not allowed, have a dance of *digoma*, specially disguised figures. When the novice has been through the requisite number of ceremonies, she is taken to the queen or the wife of the district head to be beaten with a stick as a sign of her graduation.

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Boys' initiation (*vudiga*) is much more spectacular than the *khoba*. Typically it is held by the whole tribe every twelve to fifteen years, but some district heads occasionally do not wait for the authority of the queen. The last *vudiga* upon a national scale was in 1919, but since then there have been local lodges, such as the one held by the district head Maunadala in 1937. The interval of more than twenty years is not considered extraordinary. Sometimes in the past there were delays, especially in the latter half of the reigns of queens, because, so it is said, they wished to postpone their ritual end, which coincided with the fourth initiation after their accession. In 1938-9 the *vyali*, or girls' initiation, was revived after thirty-five years, partly as a preliminary to the next boys' initiation; and if within a year or so there is a *vudiga*, it will be the third of a reign that has already lasted forty-three years. There are other reasons for the present delay. The *vudiga* involves an immense organization, brings all public activities, such as the courts, to a standstill, upsets the economic routine, and concentrates energies upon one supreme

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object. In modern conditions it is not easy to cope with such a situation. 881
On the one hand, many men work in the towns and some boys attend mission schools, and on the other the mobilization of the necessary organization and incentives is difficult in the face of discouragement and opposition. Many people realize that for practical purposes the payment of tax marks the introduction to manhood. The Christian mission cannot countenance interference with its schools. Adjustments are necessary, and in some tribes they are being successfully made; for instance, among the Koni of Majala, we saw an experiment whereby the whole *vudiga* was crowded into the month's holiday of the school in June-July, the purpose being to avoid conflicts with the Church and the educational authorities.

We cannot in this brief and generalized account do more than refer 881 cursorily to a few aspects of the institution. It involves circumcision, but 304 has nothing to do with biological puberty. Side by side with toddlers still drinking at their mother's breast, such as Khiebe in the 1919 initiation, married men of thirty or forty go to be circumcised. They will all one day belong to the same regiment. Moreover, there used to be an attenuated puberty rite, *hu fura khirugulu* (chewing the herb *khirugulu*), which is also chewed by doctors in order to give them power and insight to interpret the bones. The puberty rite took place after the first nocturnal emission; the boy went down to the river to wash; he was made to dig up a root, chew it and rub it between his legs in order to prevent the danger of *makhuma* (illness associated with crises in life); and he advanced from being a *musinaba* (child) to being a *muŋanga* (adolescent or young man).

The *vudiga* is quite different: it is a circumcision rite which invests 881 the adolescent with the beginnings of social adulthood. But the investiture is imperfect, for manhood is not attained at a single bound; one grows into it by imperceptible stages. There is no single criterion of adulthood and the maturity that is required cannot be given merely by a ritual act. For that reason also, the *vudiga* teaches, not any single virtue, but impresses upon the boy all the values of the society and the necessity of a new outlook. From the almost outlaw play-gang, he must be conducted to the fringes of responsible society or be placed in a position from which he can gradually make his way into society. It would be an exaggeration to say that the *vudiga* is designed to cope with the turbulence of youth; for even the circumcised are still wild.

The general pattern of the *vudiga* has often been described and is not difficult to understand. After some preliminary practice of songs, which are the life-blood of the institution, the would-be novices undergo a series of rites culminating in the circumcision at the river and are taken into a lodge hidden somewhere in the bush. This cuts them off completely from the outside world. In their seclusion, emphasized by all manner of taboos and restrictions which mark the difference of their lives from that of ordinary people, they learn strange songs and unintelligible formulae. The spirit of this period is difficult to recapture and the obscure symbolism and secret rites seem unrelated to any cultural realities; yet we must think of them as having their roots deep in the past, while they have become overgrown with the meanings and

- 881 purposes of the present culture. Then follows a stage, for about a month, of even stranger events, and it is heralded by a re-orientation of life within the lodge. At their singing performances the novices begin to sit facing the east, not the west, as in the previous three months. This re-orientation gradually affects more and more activities and issues in tentative contacts with the outside world. At last the lodge is burnt down and the initiates go home, where for a further week they remain on the fringes of ordinary life, to be drawn closer and closer by gradual ritual steps into the society and its everyday activities. But if these broad stages are intelligible enough, it is very different when we examine the details. They obviously have an immense background, both in a past that is lost in oblivion and in a present that owes many of its values to that past, but has at the same time added to and modified these values. Fortunately, however, as it is beyond the scope of this book to deal with those details, we may content ourselves with a few general observations.

The first stage among the Lovedu is *hu hwa*, when the heads of districts are told to arrange that the novices be taken into the veld to learn songs. The teaching is quite informal; it is a preparatory class, so that the proceedings in the lodge two weeks later may go with a swing. The teaching is done, not by the real shepherds (*medabi*), but by their juniors, those who were very young in the previous lodge. They were the large-bellied toddlers (*dimbana*, literally 'little stomachs') who ran away from their mothers to enjoy the excitement of the lodge. It could hardly be expected that they would have absorbed much and so they learn now by teaching the novices. At this preliminary and informal training, the boys may attend if they like; there are no taboos and no restrictions; the teachers may not chastise their pupils. There is as yet no seclusion. Nor are the novices given any special work to do for the chief. The fence of the *khoro* at the capital has to be rebuilt, but the novices do no more than they, as youngsters living at the capital, would do on other occasions when the *khoro* has to be repaired. When they come home they, as well as other young boys, bring light branches used to fill in the interstices between the poles. From areas beyond the capital it is only the older men who, as is customary whenever the *khoro* is built, give their assistance. At last the new moon appears, and Copernicus heralds the approach of winter. The shepherds have their hair shaved, district heads come to 'take the firebrand', the symbol that authorizes them to hold the initiation, and the *oudiga* officially opens at the capital. It is a ritual occasion: the older men beat the younger, sometimes black porridge without relish is eaten in the cattle kraal, there is an alarm, and the boys are conducted to the river to be circumcised.

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304 For the circumcision the boys go to the valley which is appropriately called 'the place where things are forgotten'. They are being separated from ordinary life; they 'get lost'. The 'goma first bites its owners', for in this as in other acts regard is had to certain precedences. It is the hierarchy of rank, as at a formal dinner among us, that is emphasized; but the precedence extends only, so to speak, to the three people sitting at the head table; the others take their place anywhere. As the operator proceeds, the old men chant, 'Sever, sever with the knife, [the foreskins]

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let the fishes take' (*tshikhi-tshikhi ga mufaga, khorc jia*). It is the shepherds 881
 who are chastised as they drive the novices, called cane-rats (*magwicle*) 304
 at this stage, to the circumcision; they run the gauntlet through the ranks
 of singing men. It is enough that the novices should suffer the painful
 operation. Some bleed profusely, but it is their own fault (so it is thought);
 the medicine they are given can only alleviate the penalty for pre-circum-
 cision promiscuity. Much else is enacted, but we must pass on to the
 next stage, the three months of intensive training in the lodge. It is the
 period, *par excellence*, of seclusion. The novices learn songs and formulae;
 they make a dancing costume and practise dances; their eating is a hurried
 ritual, for, as they phrase it, 'We are going to the medicines, the medicines
 of the veld to which there is no end.' By this they mean they have to go
 out to hunt, but clearly it is more than hunting that is intended; the
 outside world is full of wonderful things, shrubs and trees and animals
 which require their urgent attention; and there is so much to be done
 and to be learnt, that they should not spend all their time filling their
 bellies.

If that is the meaning of the ritual at the sacred tables, great *digoma* 881
 which shepherds, polluted by contact with women, approach at the peril
 of causing the novices to vomit, the ritual of the boys when they sit by
 the side of the fire 'stabbing the elephant' is inscrutably obscure. In
 other tribes the fire is undying and is called 'the elephant'. The Lovedu
 call the fire *khisibe* (meaning 'unknown', but probably from Kharanga
zimbe, a coal of fire) not *dou* (elephant); they do not conceive it to be
 undying and they know nothing of the conception of 'stabbing the
 elephant'. Yet some of these conceptions are clearly present in the
 ritual: the ritual singing is *hu fefa dou*, merely one of the special phrases
 of the lodge; the song is *do' vetsi*, an obvious contraction of *dou etsela*
 (elephant lie down); but not even the old men could suggest the derivation
 of the one from the other; the boys swing their arms in imitation of a
 stabbing action, but it is not thought of as such and, as they sing, the old
 men chant, 'Stab the elephant with arrows; next moon we return to those
 who have stayed at home.' Even this last is interpreted to mean that the
 boys by their action push on the moon to accelerate their return home.
 At a later stage, after the 'change', the *do' vetsi* song becomes '*Mamafo*
u ile dou sala shagom' (mother-of-eyes *azid*, 'elephant remain in the
 country'—because the boys are going home). We give this brief recon-
 struction to show how, despite obvious suggestions in this central ritual
 of the lodge, the Lovedu have reinterpreted the whole situation. This is
 one of the details to which we have referred, but with which we cannot
 here deal. The whole *vadiga* ritual is full of them and as often as not the
 original words of songs or formulae have become distorted out of recog-
 nition. Indeed, the diffusion of a culture element is far from being a
 simple matter.

The three months' seclusion is marked by taboos and restrictions and
 a régime which, for the Lovedu, is exceptionally strict. But, by compari-
 son with other tribes, the taboos are not stringent and a great deal of
 latitude is allowed. The large-bellied toddlers are tenderly cared for by
 the old men. By day they play about in the lodge enclosure and by night

●88| they sleep by the 'mother' of the lodge (*magala*) near the fire. Those a little older set their traps and catch mice, which they roast by the *khisibe* fire; but relish and wild fruit is usually forbidden to them and they may not, though they often do, drink water. Sick boys, elsewhere subjected to hardships and taunts, are nursed and given soft food, not the hard *khiwonelo* of the novices. The novices who go out to hunt certainly resent the malingering of the lazy ones (*magatha*), who are strong enough, but stay at home on this or that pretext. But the true spirit of the *vudiga* is seen, not so much in the beatings that the shepherds (*medabi*) administer, for they are beaten as much as if not more than, the novices, but in the actions and attitude of the older men. There are *medidi*, one regiment senior to the *medabi*, who are never beaten, but may be fined; and older than they are the old men (*vakhlabaye*). They are kindly greybeards, some of them officials of the lodge and some who do no work (*vuralizijd*). Some of them constantly intercede for the young and weak boys who are threatened with punishment or trials beyond their strength or endurance, or 'stand for' those deserving novices who had been obedient or generous or respectful in their childhood. Above all, these old men, mellow with age and mature in wisdom, conditioned to a culture founded upon compromise and easy relations, not only restrain excesses, but add to the beauty of the performances by chanting their refrain of sayings and proverbs, encouragements and admonitions. It is they, not the shepherds with their whips, that give the tone to the proceedings.

The stage after this period of seclusion is called the 'change' (*hu fedulctwa*). The boys sit by the fire facing the rising, not the setting, sun, as was the case in the previous three months. Of course, we must not expect precision: the 1919 fire ran north-south, not east-west; the ideal always gives way to the practical, for the east-west disposition was rendered difficult, though not impossible, by the slope of the ground. In other respects also it was the spirit not the letter of the law that determined various arrangements. After the 'change' life is somewhat different in the lodge. The boys used to do homage (*losa*) to a *morula* tree near the fire as if it were their ancestor (grandparent). But the tree mysteriously withers and, after the change, is replaced by a pole (*murahadu*). No teaching is done from either tree or pole as is the case in other tribes, but it is associated with a whole series of ritual acts. After the 'change' no longer shepherds but women bring the food; boys perform within sight of women; some of the food taboos are raised, but relish, though always brought, is forbidden and still thrown into the refuse heap. Apart from these and many other changes, we must also mention the visit by the novices to the village in order to 'beg for salt'. Then they sing the praises of salt, the seasoning virtues of which they now fully appreciate, having gone without it for so long. But on their return the pole has gone; their grandparent has died.

[778] And now we press on to a day of great doings. The novices go out to [362] 'scratch [as fowls do] for food', only this means a spectacular dance before the women. That night, the last night in the lodge, it is *khilala-nemi*, the night of standing, though many quietly doze off or escape to rest in the bush near by; there is none of the concentration we expect on

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occasions of importance. The boys are shown several sacred objects (*digoma*), each with its own meaning; and the proceedings end with the naming of the lodge and the new regiment that has been created. Next morning the boys remove the clay that 'disguised' them during their seclusion. They are given a loin cloth, which they wear back to front, their hair, except for a circular crown, is shaved and they are smeared with fat (not ochre among the royal Lovedu). They are 'people from the refuse heap' (*zwigcamathukhu*), a name they discard only when, a week later, their heads are completely shaved. As they leave, the lodge, with all in it, is burnt down. [778] [302]

The *oudiga* is not at an end yet; it has merely entered a new stage in which the discipline is further relaxed. The novices leave the lodge with double-pointed sticks, covering with their hands the two ends, which are fashioned like the *glans penis*. In that manner they go about whenever they are in public; the action is said to impress upon them the necessity of concealing the object and meaning of circumcision. When they arrive at the village their mothers appear dancing with joy and choose out their sons, not always correctly, because their heads are bent down and their bodies have grown a good deal in the lodge. A goat is killed for them; it is the goat 'of vomiting the rats', for as men they must cast out the things of their childhood. Then for the next week they are in a state of semi-seclusion, but there are still many observances. They appear in public only in the bent, humble attitude, they carry their sticks, and they wear their loin cloths the wrong way round. Nevertheless, the 'gathering up' (*hu aluha*) into the society proceeds apace. They have a special enclosure made for them in the veld, the *khikhudo* (hiding place or secluded spot), in which they spend some time of the day. But they are scattered, as each group of villages has its own secluded spot; and their separateness and solidarity is further broken up by sleeping at home and herding for their own people. They do not speak, especially not to women, but at night at home they have contests of riddles (*nyebo*) with the old women who come to visit them, exactly as after a marriage ceremony. This stage ends with the 'seizing of the lion' (*hu tswara dau*). One night the shepherds go out with bullroarers, the whirling of which produces the roar of the lion. The boys give chase and he who catches the 'lion' is praised by the old men. [891]

Finally come the last ritual acts. The boys are taken down to the river to lift the 'stomach of the cow', a log tied to a stone in a pool, and then to 'kindle a fire on the river' (done on a log in the water), for a man must be both strong and clever; he must be able even to make fire in the water. After these tests there is the final ordeal at the cave to which the boys are taken one by one, are beaten and given their last admonitions. At the cave the double-pointed stick is discarded, the fat removed from their heads and, if two brothers have attended the same lodge, the elder beats the younger on the way home to remove the presumption of belonging to the same regiment. At home the initiate's mother must *noia* him by a gift to 'open his mouth', and next day each of the boys, accompanied by a shepherd, goes to visit some relative, who will feast him with meat and beer. [431]

- 881 That in the briefest possible outline is the procedure followed in the *rudiga*. To recapture the whole atmosphere, to present the details of a four months' ceremonial full of incident and meaning, is not possible. All we can do is to single out one or two special features of the educational aspect. Let us first dispel the idea that the régime is a rigid one. How can it be when there are toddlers of six or seven years of age nestling up to the 'mother' of the lodge where he sleeps by the fire? The boys are beaten, it is true, and they have to undergo various kinds of punishment, but the old men are there to 'stand for them'; and when the novices are tired, one of these kindly old men or a visitor will *rula* them, take off the weight from their heads, so that they can go to bed early. The little ones do not go out to hunt, they play about in the lodge. If one of them cries, the 'mother' of the lodge will inquire the cause from the *washe* (the head of the initiates), and if the *washe* has been negligent, it is he who will be punished. The cold is never severe nor are the boys attacked by worms or ants (for the floor is covered with ash); there is no rule that they must sleep on their backs with head or feet toward the fire, so that they will suffer more from the cold. Boys do not talk as if the *rudiga* is a terrible ordeal; it is the shepherds as much as the initiates who are punished. The food is not nauseating, but what is mentioned as particularly trying is the stench issuing from the healing wounds. The stomach contents of a buck killed in the hunt is sprinkled over their porridge, but they like it and it is used in ordinary life as food. They may not drink water, but the lodge is quite near the river and it is not difficult to steal a drink now and then. Meat is never wholly taboo. They can always trap mice and rats and sometimes they are given meat, though it must not be openly displayed. Sometimes, when they are out hunting, the command '*Zapi*' is given; it is a signal for the boys to make an onslaught upon a sweet sorghum field or on wild fruits. It is said that a clever boy is very seldom beaten. The silence that is enjoined upon them, for theoretically they may communicate only by whistling, is not absolute; they may whisper to one another and only loud speaking is punished. They are not driven into cold pools every day to remove the scab of their wounds. On the contrary, the old men examine the wounds every day; and the doctor who has operated badly may be disgraced, as one was during the 1919 school; he was ignominiously chased away from the lodge. In short, despite the trials and restrictions, the régime is on the whole a mild one.
- 881 Obscene language does not loom large; it plays its part, not as obscenity, but as ritual, but it is not an imposing part. After the 'change', when women start bringing the food, it is the shepherds who may swear at them. 'Go and eat,' they say; 'your pubes are torn'; or 'The red inside of your private parts, oho'; but they add, 'Do not feel hurt, women. We are not swearing at you. We are praising you.' But wilful swearing is an offence, as we saw in the *nyali* (girls' initiation), when even one of the important officials of the school, the attendant of the Bird, swore at a girl who had made a mistake and was promptly fined a goat. When the boys sit eating by the tables, it is at the command 'Let them defecate' (*A vu-le nyi*) that they stop, but in the circumstances it means no more than 'Dismiss'. Indeed, the word *muuzadi* (women) and any word associated

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with women is not to be used within the lodge at all. There is a rounded ball of porridge set upon a stick which is stuck into the food brought to the boys and it is called *khigagomom* (clitoris); when the boys sit down by the tables or fire they are ordered to 'close the anus' and have to press one heel into the anus as they sit; and undoubtedly many of the formulae appear to have obscene references. But it would be a very great surprise to a Lovedu boy to learn that the *vodiga* teaches anything about sex or that there is anything obscene in it. Indeed, they know but disapprove of the delight in obscenity at the Shangana-Tonga lodges.

There is little direct teaching. One of the trials, that of hopping along with a stick, sharpened at both ends and pressed between the knees, is said to remind the boys that they must not defecate on the road, but should go into the bush. But note that little Mulati was too young to undergo it, Khizbe escaped it because his uncle 'stood for him', and Mudiva was sleeping in the hedge on the night it was undergone. The boys are all told they should avoid women since for a long time the wound will be liable to reopen and become bad. They are also warned not to divulge the secrets of the lodge. But that is practically the sum total of the direct admonitions. The laws and songs and formulae do not contain any precepts that the initiates understand or can bring into relation with virtues. And the same may be said of the punishments and ordeals. These things have nothing to do with moral standards or the inculcation of knowledge of facts. But they contribute to the general atmosphere, and their effect, in the context of the whole, is tremendous. The initiation is something different from ordinary life. Its genius lies, not in direct teaching, but in the manner in which the values of the society are emphasized. The final effect is to transform the boys into men; and certainly the situation is manipulated with consummate skill to attain this end. To us everything may appear meaningless. But we hardly realize how small is the life-adjustment value of mere verbal knowledge of facts and how important is the inculcation of a new set of standards. We know of these things from such religious experiences as conversion. The *vodiga* performs the same function; it is a turning away from the things of childhood and a turning towards the things of adulthood. Our pedagogical techniques might be tenfold more effective if they relied more upon the methods of the soap-box orator, of commercial advertising, and even of the yellow Press. Symbols and slogans, skilful manipulation of psychological situations, the play upon sentiments rooted in the cultural background—these are the methods of the *vodiga* as they are also the methods of our most skilful propaganda and our most effective advertisements. Who can deny that they contribute more to the moulding of our values and of our behaviour than do the science and history and mathematics in our schools? Perhaps it is fortunate that our pedagogical techniques are impotent, for the somewhat unrealistic world of our schools would otherwise wholly unfit us for life. But the technique of the lodge, though it teaches no verbal knowledge of facts, is effective and there is nothing in the *vodiga* which is out of harmony with the realities of life.

Consider for a moment the situation as the boys 'stab the elephant'.

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THE REALM OF A RAIN-QUEEN

881 Consider for a moment the situation as the boys and the novices

523 As they do so, the old men, mature in their wisdom, kindly guardians of

847 the initiates, slowly and solemnly 'sing with signs' (sa rima zuega).

These *zuega* are often also an accompaniment of the songs of the boys, in themselves most exquisite poetry. Many of the 'signs' are unintelligible, e.g. 'You may bring me a skin cradle. I am carrying an infant, my little children'; or 'The guinea fowls are crying; they are scratching for food, my children.' The old men always greet the novices, *oona na ga* (my little ones), though to one another and to the shepherds they are *salbi* (witches). The old men also chant proverbs and sayings, warnings and advice, all manner of admonitions and encouragement, some stereotyped, some extempore. To enumerate them would be to enumerate the virtues that are esteemed and the vices that are condemned in the society. 'I told you, O novice, but you plugged your ears with plugs of wood' is a general admonition, reminding the boys that, when they were young, they often were disobedient and now their errors are being expiated. Young boys are often told that, when they go to the *rudiga*, their impudence and disobedience will make their trials harder. 'Beware', a man might say to a youngster who is unwilling to help him or an elder. 'The *rudiga* is not far off; you will find no one to lift the weight from your head.' The virtues that are inculcated in this way are merely those the boys have heard of a thousand times in their ordinary lives. Again, one must not imagine that the boys take more note of the words of the old men in the lodge than we do when we sing a hymn in church, but they know that those *zuega* and admonitions express the fundamental values and ideals in the society: generosity, respectfulness and obedience to the elders, helpfulness, and so on. 'Give your seat up to an old man, carry his bundle for him on the road, go with him further than he asks you, do not mock at the blind or cripple'—these are some of the things one old man may say, whereas another will condemn theft and adultery and extol mutuality and modesty, almost impersonally, it is true, but always beautifully, solemnly, and effectively. These things sink into the minds of the novices, not as so many individual precepts, but as part of the ritual of the lodge, all indivisibly united into one whole concretion of values and sentiments. A man will say that the *rudiga* is a wonderful thing, but he will be at a loss to tell you anything concrete that it teaches. For you cannot dissect out a precept here and an example there—it is all one, like life itself.

881 We may now, before proceeding to adult education, touch upon a few
831 aspects of the *rudiga* and the *Abaka*. Besides breaking the girl's attachment to the things of her childhood, the *Abaka* stresses the importance and dangers of sexual maturity. But it can hardly be said that the *rudiga* is much concerned with the sudden emergence of a capacity for true sexual experience. Both institutions help us to understand the meaning and methods of attaining social adulthood; but they belong to different cultural backgrounds and are derived from different cultural sources. They are not counterparts of one another. The *Abaka* is indigenous, the *rudiga* is foreign. We cannot here study the manner in which these two institutions, as well as the *ryali* and *salwera* (two further initiations for boys and girls), have merged with the different cultures in neighbouring tribes though the varying acceptance or rejection or

remoulding of culture elements provides important clues to understanding the Lovedu. The *oudiga*, despite its admirable integration into Lovedu culture, still overstresses national regimentation and military virtues; it makes too much of the repudiation of association with women (a tendency rectified in the *oyali*); and the conception in it of an ordeal or revenge inflicted by adults, who have suffered circumcision, upon novices whose turn to suffer has come is too pronounced for a culture that abhors vengeance. It is curious, also, that in a society in which mates are born for one another the problem of harmonizing romantic love with the limited range of socially approved choices is not dealt with in the *khoba* or the *oudiga*. Pre-marital sexual experiment is excluded at least as a means of avoiding individual incompatibilities; but such incompatibilities are not phrased as a difficulty in marriage, the sexual aspect of which is one of the least important in Lovedu society, and the institution of *vudjavu* (of having lovers), with whom married much more than unmarried men or women form liaisons, gives an outlet to romanticism and supports the long suckling period. The chastity that is stressed in the *khoba* is the pre-marital chastity that leads to no complications in the social structure, such as would be caused by the birth of a child to an unmarried girl; it does not preclude those satisfactions the desire for which is inevitably aroused by the great value that is placed upon fertility.

The rites of the *oudiga* and *khoba* do not, as we have seen, change boys and girls from youth to full-fledged manhood. The transition is a gradual one. The *khoba* becomes a bride; the bride after the birth of her first child is a *mudwana*; and she in turn, when her children marry, is a venerable old woman (*mukhegulu*). The bride is of small consequence even in her own home; for long she serves an apprenticeship under the control of her mother-in-law, who also takes her child out of her hands, bathes it and feeds it. Only as an old woman does she reach the peak of her life. With a man the position is no different. After the *oudiga* he has a kind of legal status. After marriage he advances a further stage, but in his marital relations and as a father he is a child dependent upon advice from his elders. In public activities, such as in the courts, he still sits and listens, but the old men may entrust a case to him and his age-mates to teach them a sense of responsibility. His helplessness is strikingly in evidence when a child is born to him: he does not see it at first, knows little of its progress, is ordered by the old women to seek this or that root, for what purpose he cannot tell, and, when the child is taken out of the hut, he is merely called, given medicine and told what to do with it. Finally, he must seek the advice of the old women as to when he may resume sexual intercourse with his wife. In other spheres of life also, the education of the man or the woman gradually advances. Craftsmanship, for instance, is the province of the old. Young men and women may learn from their fathers or mothers, but more usually the leisure and inclination come in their old age. A bride, fully occupied with housework and cultivation under the eye of her mother-in-law, has no time for pottery and mat-making; a young man's life is too unsettled to allow him quietly to sit down to make a basket or a stamping-block. The Lovedu

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the difficulties of the young boy or girl are great and the conflicts within him irreconcilable. He is ragged by other scholars unless he also attends church; he is discouraged from playing with his friends, the pagans who do not attend school; he is deprived of the joys of dancing and drumming. The *khosha* and play-housekeeping are taboo to him. Tensions and maladjustments arise: Christian girls disgrace themselves and outrage Christian sentiment by having more illegitimate children than pagans; people laugh when they see Christian men attending beer-drinks and scornfully remark upon the bad manners of pretentious school-children.

The school, nevertheless, has made a notable contribution. Its teachings have some immediate life-adjustment value. Reading and writing, a training for a profession, a knowledge of English or Afrikaans are valuable aids in the economic struggle. But more important in the modern world is the long-run adjustment value of the outlook engendered in the schools. In the culture-contact situation, with the scales weighted in favour of a capacity to accommodate oneself to European thought and methods, the training of the school prepares the way to some measure of co-operation with agricultural demonstrators, European health officers, and those who are concerned with the reclamation of the reserves. The idea of progress takes root and, though it is a perverted idea, it provides new incentives and counteracts the sense of frustration before the march of an overwhelming force, the force of Western culture.

Unfortunately, the gains are counterbalanced by the losses. It may be that the losses are temporary, because, on the one hand, they are losses from the point of view of the old culture and, on the other, in a period of transition there must inevitably be tensions and conflicts. Men are guided by vast systems of values and sentiments, built up laboriously by centuries of tradition; these cannot be replaced by a new set of standards inculcated by a single institution, such as the modern school, especially when that institution uses ineffective techniques and is external to the main trends of the culture. Some of the losses are not inevitable: it is not the school as such which disables educated young men from accepting manual labour and housework. It might even be possible to avoid the loss of that valuable body of *veldlore* which the herdboys learn during the years of herding. Boys and girls need the three R's; they need to understand and trust the ways of the white man; but they also need the knowledge and the standards that make life worth while in the society of which they are part. It is the task of the school to take account, not of one, but of all these needs.

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X. MASQUERADE OF THE UUKHAMA

(a) STRUTTING OF THE UUKHAMA DANCE

(b) DANCE OF THE DUKHAMA

[Facing A129]

794 shepherds, walked, whistling as they went and holding sticks they had cut. Soon they met a man and were ordered by the shepherds to whistle 'mulo us go' (my law). The stranger in reply recited a *gummo* law for them. A little further on they came upon three women and a man, all of whom fled on their approach, for, should they meet any one unable to give them a law, he is beaten unmercifully. The next initiated man they met asked the initiates to give him a law after he had recited one and, when they could not, he demanded 'his leg', i.e. each boy was to sit down holding up the left leg to be seized and beaten. As, however, they had not yet had an opportunity of learning any formulae, their shepherds procured exemption for them by giving the man snuff instead. That night they asked for food at a village, for they had had nothing all day, but the man insisted on their sleeping there and killed a goat in their honour. They set out again long before dawn so as not to be seen by women.

At home an enclosure of branches was made for them very near the village where they had to spend their time for the next few weeks. Here their food was brought from home by the shepherds, but they slept in the village in huts set aside for this purpose, coming in late at night and leaving again before dawn when women began to stamp. There were no food regulations. By day the smallest boys went out to herd goats, but the old initiates remained in the lodge, going out every afternoon either to fetch wood, each one log only, for the evening fires, or sometimes to hunt birds. When outside the lodge, they have to whistle as a warning to the uninitiated not to approach too near. They may not talk to each other except when out of sight. During this time many formulae, most of which are quite meaningless to the initiates as well as to older people, are taught by the shepherds, who beat them when they are unable to remember them; but there are no songs. The laws are passwords which indicate that you have been initiated. On the day after their arrival home, powdered medicine was given the initiates to put in their wounds, but for the rest one day was much like another. By the fifth week, when they were all thoroughly bored and tired, the order was given that they must go and wash at a place near Mauwi called *vupale-muroke* (where the *gummo* initiates wash). While they washed, the *swidjani* were crying in the bush and the big sacred drum at Mauwi was beaten a few times. Then they went home where, on kneeling to greet, each one received 12. from his parents (*ku soma*). The lodge is merely broken down and the cloths taken home to be used. The *gummo* initiation is an initiation into a cult rather than a 'school', for, beside the formulae, the boys receive no instruction beyond the warning not to divulge what they have seen in the *gummo* lodge. The main purpose of their seclusion is to enable their wounds to heal before they can take part in ordinary life.

881 The *nyali*, generally looked upon as an initiation for girls, is to a great extent also the concern of old and mature men, who from a certain stage take part in it as fully as, if not more so than, the older women. Further, in many districts, though not at the royal village where they do not have *swidjani* (their boys undergoing a kind of abbreviated form of this initiation for a few days only at Mamadala's), the *swidjani* for boys is held simultaneously

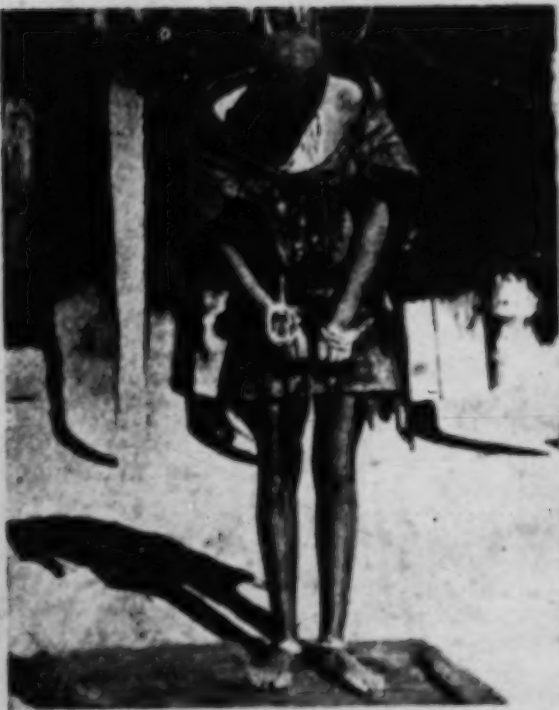
with the *nyali*, but beginning rather later when the grass is sufficiently long to be used for the elaborate costumes worn. As in the case of circumcision, the *nyali*, though of national importance, is held locally by various district heads. Only those heads whose ancestors traditionally have held the *nyali* are allowed to hold it, and control is exercised by the fact that permission (literally, *akiso aka mufu*, or firebrand) has to be obtained from the queen by all those wishing to hold a *nyali* by payment of £1. One finds considerable variation from one district to another. In some the *nyali* only is held, their boys having to go elsewhere for initiation into *vukwera*; in others *vukwera* is held simultaneously with the *nyali*, while everywhere there are variations in detail according to the doctor responsible for the initiation or the religious habits and desires of the headman holding the initiation. Hence it is that, while at the royal village men of the last regiment (*mugutu*—Leopards) were in 1939 considered too young to be allowed to enter the enclosure of the girls or the place where the old men sit with their wonderful Bird, in many of the districts they were not deterred at all. At the great opening ceremony, when the gods of whoever holds the school are approached for their blessings, those of the royal *nyali* were merely 'cooled' by the spurting of water and a prayer, whereas those of *Ralela* were propitiated with beer brought to the family graves in the depths of the forest. And while at the royal village the initiates were smeared with the stomach contents of a head of cattle killed by being shot, for those of *Ralela* the tail fat of a sheep ritually killed with a medicated knife was used, the stomach contents being mixed with medicine for strengthening the enclosure. The doctor at the royal ceremony carried all the meat of the slaughtered beasts away on donkeys for his own private use, but at *Ralela* the assembled company, including men, ate the meat with medicine. The institution is sufficiently flexible to allow for changes in keeping with modern needs and modern ideas: six European nails were allowed in the construction of the hut of the Bird, a stipulation being made that they should not be visible, loin cloths of material took the place of hide in many areas and other, more far-reaching innovations differentiated the 1939 ceremony from those in older days. All the 'schools' do not open simultaneously: months after the queen's *nyali* had begun in 1939, district heads were sending to ask permission to hold theirs, while even in the queen's own *nyali* new initiates were joining as much as five months after the opening. In a society where time is unimportant this is not unexpected.

It is not possible here to give a detailed account of *nyali* ceremonial. Only a few of its most important aspects and main functions will be touched upon. Considerable emphasis is laid in the *nyali* on age and rank. The initiates have to be very respectful towards old men and women, greeting them in a special manner (kneeling and clapping with hallowed hands) whenever they pass them. This general pattern is exactly the same as that found in the *evadiga*, the boys' circumcision. The last initiated regiment is to some extent in authority over the novices. Yet the initiates themselves vary in age from small girls of seven or eight to married women. Indeed, in the 1939 *nyali*, held after a lapse of thirty-five years, it was found necessary to divide the initiates into two distinct

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(b) GIRLS IN THE UVALS



(a) COMING FORTH FROM HER PUBERTY SECLUSION

[Facing p. 113]

VIII. GIRLS' INITIATION INTO WOMANHOOD

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554 regiments. Each local *vyali* has its office-bearers, whose rank above that of the rest is emphasized in a number of ways. Chief among all initiates is the *muluor*, the nearest relative of the chief or district head. She represents all the initiates, just as the queen represents the whole tribe, and so intimate is the bond between the *muluor* and the others thought to be that witches wishing to harm the whole 'school' may do so through her, and in 1939, when a snake appeared in the courtyard of initiates at the royal village, the chief initiate only was 'doctored' and the snake disappeared. She is distinguished from the rest by a special kind of dress and is always given good things to eat by another office-bearer, her 'dog', whose duty it is also to run before her, barking, when the rest are given work to do or are taken to the veld. Another office-bearer is the 'shade' of the chief initiate; towards the end of the initiation, she holds a branch above the latter's head to keep off the sun. There are some half a dozen office-bearers among initiates, as well as among the women in charge; they sit at specially prepared fireplaces and their precedence is recognized in all ceremonial.

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784 The *vyali* is of such importance that during the year that it lasts it overshadows everything else. All men's attention, all men's energies, are taken up by the *vyali*, to which everything else becomes subsidiary. Even in the *khoro*, the forum of the men, only essential cases are dealt with. All marriages are held up: any one having the temerity to take a bride to his home during the *vyali* must pay a fine of one head of cattle and a goat. To such an extent are the attention and interest of the whole country focused on the *vyali* that no rival ceremonial is tolerated. There may be no dancing other than *vyali* dancing, no singing of songs other than those sung in the *vyali*. Even the dancing of possessed people is prohibited, a taboo communicated to the various possessing spirits at a large farewell dance of all the possessed in the area just prior to the opening of the *vyali*, when they are ordered not to manifest themselves and told that none of the usual taboos of the cult will be observed for the next year. It is customary, too, before the opening of the *vyali* for each district head to bring a farewell *gasha* dance to the royal village, but this was omitted in 1938 owing to the length of time it would require. The flexibility of Lovedu rules is illustrated also in the permission which the queen gave in 1938 to people on a European farm who wanted to hold a *gasha* for Christmas, to do so, though for one day only. These rules bind even the spirits who, during the *vyali*, never come to sing and whistle when there is a harvest offering.

881 There is a period of preparation lasting about a month or six weeks in which the initiates are taught some of the songs they are to sing, the manner in which they have to greet their elders, and the way in which debarked wood will have to be collected. Only after this preparatory schooling does the official opening take place. On this occasion the doctor in control of the 'school' strengthens the girls for the initiation by means of special medical treatment and reinforces the courtyard of the chief or district head, where the initiation is held, against the entry of witches who may wish to harm the girls. The initiates are ritually beaten with medicated sticks as at the *gomane*, precedence being given to the

FERTILITY AND THE DRUM CULT

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office-bearers of the *nyali*. It is significant that medical treatment is not confined to initiates, but includes, not only the 'owners' or holders of the 'school', but in many instances also all the older men and women present. It is done to make the ceremony a success. After their treatment, the initiates may not wash until about ten days have elapsed, when the 'mother' of the 'school' takes them to the river. From this time the novices, except in the case of pregnant women, are allowed no covering over the shoulder or body. Their loin-coverings should consist of hard, unworked skins, but in the 1939 *nyali*, owing to the difficulty of obtaining skins, European cloth was allowed. [291]

From now the *nyali*, held in the *Muvv* of the district head or chief, will continue for a period of a full year. Except on a few special occasions, however, all the activities are confined to the evenings and early mornings, leaving the initiates free to carry on their ordinary work at home for the greater part of the day. Most of the initiates sleep at home and married women become pregnant and have their babies during the year of their initiation without any inconvenience.

One of the most important activities of the *nyali* is the singing and drumming every morning and evening during the whole period of the initiation. Some of the songs are related to the stage of the initiation, different stages being characterized by different songs: thus after the medical treatment marking the official opening in about September a new song that has not been practised previously is begun, and later, when summer fruits are plentiful, a song is sung in which this abundance is mentioned. There is a cluster of songs associated with bringing the singing to a close each evening, when the *Muvv* has to be closed by the girls, and again in the early morning, when the gate is opened. Most of the songs consist of a simple phrase repeated over and over again, the words of which are meaningless to the singers, and frequently, even where the song is long, only a small portion of it is repeated. There are songs consisting of praises of the queen, well-known district heads, and their areas, and a very important one in praise of the chief girl of the *nyali*. One song sung by the 'shepherds' refers to girls who enter only towards the end of the initiation, pointing out how inferior this is to full initiation, while another exhorts initiates to pinch and otherwise torment such girls. *Muxetiko* songs, which are accompanied by dancing and begun in about December, are the main feature of the singing after the Bird, the pivot of the ceremony, has arrived (April). They are very similar to *lesugu* songs sung for rain, associated with the *avilajani* spirits, and are believed to be identical in function. There are also *lesugu* songs in the *nyali*, and it is significant that among the Nareni there is each year a woman's counterpart of the *gumane* drumming in which *lesugu* songs are sung. If any initiate is seduced during the period of initiation, special songs of duration are sung in which she and her family are mentioned by name. Where the songs have no dancing accompaniment, they are sung to the clapping of hands until the arrival of the Bird, when two flat pieces of wood are used.

Initiation is considered to be a time of hardship for those who undergo it. The singing every evening, sometimes as late as eleven o'clock and

881 every morning from about five o'clock till after sunrise, is looked upon as a burden that has each time to be 'lifted' (*hu rula*) by the order of some old woman or man until the arrival of the Bird, when it will *rula* the girls at its own pleasure. Only on rare occasions, when an important visitor comes and presents the older women with a gift of snuff or money, can initiates be excused altogether for an evening. It is a hardship, too, to go all through the winter, mild though it is in the lowveld, with no covering over the upper part of the body—so much so that one married woman in the 1939 initiation pretended she was pregnant in order that she might cover her body. When she was discovered, however, she was severely beaten. The discipline of the *eyali* is not so strict that initiates are not able occasionally to absent themselves unnoticed from the singing. If discovered, they are beaten, sometimes by the queen herself. More serious cases in which an initiate has been absent for several days are treated more drastically: a whole procession of women carrying the drums sets out to her village where they pull the thatch off the roofs of the houses and exact a fine of a goat, which is killed and eaten by women and initiates alike. Breaches of the rules in the *eyali* are punished in the 'school' itself: when a number of girls shaved their hair, an action strictly forbidden during the year of initiation, not only they but all their age-mates were beaten for the offence. As a result, the offenders were pinched and ill-treated by their fellow initiates, who had been punished on their behalf. Initiates who quarrel among themselves are beaten when they gather in the enclosure to sing. There are no hardships connected with food, but on various occasions, when the girls are taken out to be shown secret objects (*digmas*), they are beaten—and one may see the marks of the sticks on their bare backs when they return. Sometimes there is an ordeal, such as being made to crawl along a path strewn with the velvet stinging-bean which causes intense irritation and itching over the whole body.

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But such hardships occur only on special occasions and are by no means the order of the day. We should also be careful not to construe the beatings in terms of our conceptions. Where we have seen them, they were half serious, half playful—for instance, when the attendant of the Bird, amid merriment from the onlookers, chastised late-comers to the evening performance, the force of the blows being spent innocuously upon the skirts of the girls as they ran past him to take their places. The hardships and beatings certainly do not depress even the smallest of the girls. During the *morala* season they had to make a large quantity of cider which was consumed by initiated women, who gave a little also to the men, and, on one occasion, when the courtyard became overgrown with grass, the initiates were made to weed it. These tasks over a period of a whole year indicate clearly that work is not a major hardship.

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A most essential aspect of the *eyali* is the showing of *digmas*, usually in some secluded spot to which the initiates are taken, but also on occasion at home in the evening, when there will be dancing all night (*Akhalamoni*—night of standing). The connotation of the word *gama* is difficult to grasp. A *gama* is something secret and wonderful, something which it is a privilege to see and which is usually shown to initiates during an initiation.

Though made by men or women, there is something almost super-⁸⁸¹ natural about a *goma*: its manufacture is called 'giving birth to' (*hu*⁷⁷⁸ *dema* *digoma*) and though, for example, in the case of a dancing *goma*, every one knows that some person is playing the part, this in no way detracts from its importance. Many of the *digoma* are masked figures in costumes made of grass, reeds, or leaves. Some are mimmeries with a meaning attached; others are simply interesting or wonderful objects. One *goma*, *daw* (lion), consists of a sound made by passing the hand down a stick on a piece of hide held over a pot. These *digoma* are traditional in initiations, but very often new ones are invented and, since different regiments or areas come on many ceremonial occasions with their own *digoma*, there may be a mild competitive element in the showing of *digoma*, especially in *Akoba* and *eyali*. Laws taught in initiation ceremonial are also referred to as *digoma*. But the greatest of all *digoma* are the *goma* drums, which are looked upon as gods and are associated with the ancestors and religious ritual. *Digoma* vary from laws or mummeries to semi-gods. The element of awe, so conspicuously absent in Lovedu religious practices, is found in their attitude towards *digoma*—not that there is any display of awe towards them or in their presence, but that in referring to some of them people talk as though of something awesome or god-like. Even the *swigwani*, ancestral spirits, who come to earth when *goma* drums are played or at religious ceremonies, are thought of as *digoma*, which in this manner become part of religion itself. [534] [776] [781]

The greatest *goma* of the *eyali* is *Abiagwani* or *Abiagwani*, referred to also as the great Bird of Muhale or of Rhodesia who, like most *digoma*, is believed to come from a pool in the river. It is a *goma* of the men and manifests itself only when there is moonlight, returning, it is said, to its pool when the moon is dark. But it is always there, secreted in its enclosure. The girls have to sing whether it is there or not, and often, though the moon is dark, it whistles its directions and commands. It consists of a light, semicircular framework about 4 ft. high, over which are put strings of the wags thorn tree (*Acacia robusta*), which have been placed in water to become black. Surmounting it all is a small head crowned with an ostrich or other feather. It is seen only occasionally, when it comes dancing into the *eyali* courtyard at night, and, in spite of bright moonlight, its black colour makes it difficult to discern it clearly. It speaks and sings by whistling through an instrument similar to, but larger than, that used by *swigwani*, made of the leg-bone of cattle. [749]

This Bird is the ruling spirit of the *eyali*. It has many praises used by the girls in its honour. Coming as it does when the green foods of summer are being eaten and the grass is long, it is the embodiment of plenty and has daily to receive from each initiate summer foods and beer. All the time it is there every one in the area who makes beer has to bring one calabash to its enclosure. If this is not observed the person may be fined. The Bird regulates the whole procedure of the *eyali*, ordering which songs have to be sung, telling the girls when to dance, when to stop singing, what to do. At times it even gets angry and then, if it is dancing, it may stamp out the courtyard fires. Any infringement of the rules of the school are referred to as 'breaking the ribs' (*hu* *zwa* *lifa*)

● 381 of the Bird. One man was fined a goat for beating his wife. The Bird
779 said, 'You've beaten my *magagani*' (married initiate); another, an important official in the *oyali*, was fined for swearing at an initiate who made a mistake in her answers to the Bird. From the time of its arrival, the women of the village may not get up and begin stamping in the early mornings before the Bird has made itself heard, and it is even said that *Ahlingagani* does not like cocks near the village, because they crow before he has begun to whistle and so disregard his precedence.

The arrival of *Ahlingagani* is a culminating point in the *oyali* and comes after long and elaborate preparations. For months before its arrival, men have been erecting various enclosures beside the village—one enclosure and hut to house the Bird itself, leading into a large courtyard in which the singing and drumming of the initiates is to take place once the Bird has arrived. At the far end of the courtyard is a row of de-barked poles set up in a specially medicated furrow, backing a carefully prepared platform on and around which the initiates stand when singing in the mornings and evenings. It is looked upon by the initiates as a kind of refuge from the Bird should he come too near. In front of this *le-walile* stands the *Ahalomoni* shrine of the *oyali*, a long medicated pole of *musoso* (*Terminalia sericea*) forking at the top end into a circlet of branches. Round this pole a circular mound has been built, containing a river stone like many religious shrines. Here it is that the initiates have to stand when conversing with the Bird. Besides the enclosure, there are other preparations for the arrival of the Bird. From February and March, when the grass is long enough, bandoliers of *lejafe ruah* (*Mariscus* sp.) to be worn by the initiates once the Bird has arrived, are woven, dancing skirts of a special kind of reed strung together in pieces about 1 in. long are made, and pointed, flat pieces of wood, two for each girl, are prepared for use while singing. No significance is attached to their manufacture.

A great deal of the ceremonial of the *oyali* centres on the Bird and, in the ritual conversations that take place morning and evening between the women and the Bird, special terms peculiar to the *oyali* are employed: mealies are 'teeth of Shangane-Tonga'; beer is 'fat of the crocodile'; native potatoes are 'fingers of the baboon'; firewood is 'bones of the giraffe'. Every day some girls and women are detailed to carry the drums at about four o'clock in the afternoon to the enclosure, there to await the pleasure of the Bird. Sooner or later the Bird whistles out '*muhac* a *Khidigwa*', the opening phrase of the praise of the head of the initiates, whereupon one of the girls (any one—not necessarily the chief girl herself) mounts the shrine and replies in a loud voice, 'I've been waiting here a long while, Bird' or '*Muhac*', adding one of its many praises. 'Whose *oyali* (initiate) are you?' asks the Bird. 'I am the *oyali* of So-and-so' (giving the name of her father). The Bird will then, whistling metaphorical phrases, order the drums to be beaten, indicating what song is to be sung. The sounding of the drums is the signal for all the initiates to come to the enclosure, which gradually fills as they arrive in twos and threes. After much singing and drumming, the Bird may ask, 'What have you brought me?' to which the initiate, replying, answers, 'Crocodile's fat', or whatever she has brought. In the 1918-9 *oyali* there

was at the royal village an arrangement whereby a certain number of girls brought beer every evening (six to eight calabashes), while in the mornings each initiate came with green mealies, nuts, or any appetizing dish. These are put down at a certain spot from where the *lumati* and *lumatyona*, men who act as go-betweens when the Bird is crying, interpreting if necessary what he says, carry it all into the Bird's enclosure, where it is consumed by old men. During the *oyali* these old men sleep in that enclosure if they like, and greatly enjoy the good food brought for the Bird. Sometimes, when too much for them has accumulated, they may send some to the queen or district head. Later the Bird orders the girls to eat their supper, which they have brought with them, and after a long time gives the order to stop, '*Kwanga*'. After a while the Bird asks for his wood. Each initiate has brought one piece of wood, with bark removed, lest, it is said, scorpions which are apt to be found in the bark bite the Bird, and at the order of the Bird all proceed to a spot near the entrance to the Bird's enclosure. Here at a given signal they throw down their wood with a great noise and rush back to their platform of safety. If the moon is bright, the girls will be told to don their dancing skirts and do their whirling dance and, if it likes, the Bird itself will come dancing in, keeping to the shadows, and with one or two men always near to act as guides. They are given the order to stop by the Bird at about ten or eleven o'clock at night or eight o'clock in the morning.

Towards the end of the *oyali*, when *musotto* songs are sung, the older men come and dance before the women, waving ox tails in their hands. They would, in the *oyali* of old, wave the tail over the head of a woman they liked and, if she acknowledged it by bowing the head and clapping with hollowed hands, she was giving her consent to be his lover during the initiation. For a remarkable feature of the *oyali* was promiscuous sexual intercourse between men and women in which initiates could take part only at the end. In the 1938-9 *oyali* there was no such intercourse: it was thought that the young married men were too 'wild' (owing to modern conditions) to tolerate a position in which the older men could have free access to their wives in the initiation, and it was said that the great preponderance of women over men might lead to great jealousies and conflicts between the women for the favours of the old men.

Towards the end of the initiation a number of important events takes place. There is, first of all, a ceremony in which the old men tie up the hair of initiates—which during the year has grown to a length of an inch or two—in tufts all over the head with strings of the bark of *musotto* (*Mossie's Gelpini*). After this the women belonging to the previously initiated regiment come into the enclosure one by one, dancing and shouting the praise titles of any sons in the country. They are followed by the initiates, beginning with the office-bearers, and the ceremony therefore takes a full day or longer. While this is going on, one of the girl initiates, who is addressed by the praise-title of a wife (*musomoni*) of the queen, is taken to have her hair shaved and is dressed in a leopard skin with a collar of beads round the neck. On her return a mat is spread for her to sit on and she does obeisance in the normal manner (not the manner of initiates). Another office-bearer (*musidi*) is given a standard

- of feathers to shade the head girl. After much dancing, cloths are tied round the initiates in the manner common to the possessed. This ceremony foreshadows the end of the initiation and indicates to the whole country that it is drawing to a close. The last month is devoted to dancing: every area that is holding a *oyali* sends its initiates to dance before the queen, some coming with *vuhwera*, others without. Last of all come the people of Ravothata with the *magogobyä* and it is their performance that closes the 'school'. The *magogobyä* have more imposing costumes even than the *vuhwera*, characterized by the stuffed baboon and duiker that surmount them. After a number of important *digma* have been shown, there is a grand finale one night (*khilalawemi*), when the Bird hangs its head sideways and says, 'My head aches and I know my end has come.' A *goma* of the women, the Butterfly (*khirurwotle*), dressed in leaves, comes dancing in at the girls' entrance to tease and chase the Bird. Before sunrise, when the Bird has returned to its hut, some of the initiates (those who have come for a short time only) may be taken to 'touch the Bird', a terrible ordeal. Then next morning they are all taken to the river, where they are shaved and given new clothes to wear. They are now 'things from the rubbish heap' (*awigwamathukhu*), like boys after circumcision: they walk in a bent position, may not speak freely, receive gifts, and at night ask riddles (*dinytbo*) specially associated with initiations. The enclosures are burnt. After a final washing in the river the initiates return to ordinary life and activities. A small operation is performed on initiates at the river on the last day. Among some tribes it consists of defloration, but among the Lovedu it is said to consist of a cut above the clitoris which is so small that it causes no pain or inconvenience.
- At the time when the initiates make preparations for the arrival of the Bird (February-March), the boys of those areas that have the *vuhwera* as well are taken out into the bush every day to learn how to weave the elaborate costumes associated with this initiation. These are of two types: a light one, said to be for hunting, and a heavy one. Both costumes have skirts of loose-hanging grass, flung out in a circle by the gyrations of the dancer, as well as comely waist, arm, and leg bands and under-skirts of woven grass. The light costume has in addition broad shoulder bands crossing over chest and back and a mask resting upon the shoulders, veiling the face and open at the top. The heavy costume is far more imposing. Besides a woven waistcoat, there is an immense covering for head and shoulders, *sinigwawreswawumini*, flanked by what gives the impression of scales arranged in rows or projecting wings, and fronted by a snout like that of a crocodile. The dance reminds one, now of the prancings of a male bird courting its mate, now of a lizard convulsively shaking its whole body as it rests upon a rock. The lizard-bird suggests a weird dragon-like mythical monster, but its appearance belies its functions and qualities, though perhaps not the mystical meaning of the *digma* of the 'school'.
- The enclosure for *vuhwera* boys is made beside that for the Bird. Here, after having been beaten with medicated sticks, the boys spend their time, except when out hunting or dancing, their food being brought to

the *oyali* courtyard by their sisters. They are taught a few 'laws' or formulae associated with the *vuhwera*, but their main activities are learning to make the elaborately woven costumes and later to dance in the *oyali* courtyard. Towards the end of the initiation they spend most of their time going about to dance, accepting invitations from other district heads and paying their respects at the royal village. They do beautiful movements to the drumming of their own *oyali* girls. Only two dance at a time and, while they dance, attendants (*medabi*) stand near by supervising. The masked boys may whistle out the tune to which they wish to dance or may beg snuff by means of whistling (for this is their only means of conversation during their initiation). When they dance well, women and girls come to give them gifts of leg- or arm-rings. The *vuhwera* is a kind of finishing school, an initiation into the secret of what the Bird is and how the costumes are made. It is almost as though this is an esoteric art, the preservation of which has become the main function of the *vuhwera*. A person who enters the *vuhwera* enclosure may be required to display his skill at weaving and in 1939 a man who was unable to weave (and thus showed himself to be uninitiated) was heavily fined. The fact that there is no *vuhwera* held at the royal kraal, whose boys used in the old days to go for this initiation to Khaḡa or to the *Tsaneni*, a section of the Khaḡa, suggests that the institution is a more recent adoption than the *oyali*. [776]

It is not easy for a European to appreciate the meaning and value of such institutions as *oyali* and *vuhwera*. Most of their features cannot be explained by the Lovedu themselves. They are the result of a long, historical development which, in the absence of all evidence, may never be unravelled. The *oyali* has many aspects. One of the most important is that of a crossing or initiation similar to circumcision. The initiates are often called *soncedi* (crossers) and initiation may be referred to as 'to cross over' (*hu utla*). It is conceived as a period of hardship, a crossing for which medical treatment and ancestral blessings are essential. Respect for those older than oneself is emphasized: the initiates must be humble; but older people, especially the old men who remain in the Bird's enclosure, live royally on the beer and delicacies brought daily by initiates. There is emphasis, too, on the importance of the rank of district heads and chief, and the learning of praises of all the areas, followed towards the end of the initiation by inter-district visits, is an important feature.

Intermittent rain during the summer is an initiation in the *oyali* as a fertility and rain cult, related to the *gomomo* drum cult and serving the same purpose. The *oyali* lasts a year, a full agricultural cycle, and some of its stages are associated with the seasons: the typical *oyali* dress of the girls cannot be plaited till the grass has grown long; the Bird arrives only when there is plenty of food. The singing of *oyali* songs is believed to bring rain. Even before the rains of the summer of 1938-9 had fallen, it was said in Uluvedu that the year would be one of plenty on account of the *oyali*. These expectations were more than realized, for not only was the summer rainy, but even the winter, which is normally dry, was exceptionally wet. Stress is laid in the *oyali* on grass and vegetation: the girls wear plaited bandollers of grass which are said by

794 some to render them fertile; the *digoma* are almost all made of grasses,
 789 reeds, or leaves; the remarkable *vuhvera* costumes are made of various
 778 special kinds of grass; and on one of the most important excursions made
 by the *vyali* girls, called *maidini* (at the locusts), they are made to collect
 the bark of various kinds of trees. The *vyali* as a fertility rite is most
 clearly seen in the sexual intercourse at the order of the Bird which used
 to be indulged in towards the end of the initiation on the approach of
 spring. The true meaning of the Bird is difficult to discover, though it
 is significant that it is associated with moonlight, comes from a pool,
 and declares on its departure that it will leave mists behind it. In one
 praise song of the Bird it appears to be referred to as *vadaja*, the ancestral
 spirits: 'I have heard you, Bird of ours and *Rahufa* of *Muhale*. The
 father of giving has gone, O *vadaja*. There remain only things for which
 one must pay' (*Gi hu phulaphudt noni yenu le vuRahufa a Muhale rahufa
 khi ile, vadaja, hu sadt kha muthtgo fela*). This Bird, *goma* of the old men,
 is related to the *gomana* cult, using the same method of whistling through
 an instrument.

- 881 The Lovedu appear to have borrowed *vyali* and *vuhvera* and the
 794 *gomana* drum cult from neighbours. Some elements, like *swidajani*,
 771 have become firmly embedded in a number of institutions; others, like
vuhvera, are looked upon more as entertaining appurtenances without
 any very serious meaning beyond that of giving pleasure. But the sacred
 drum cult clashes to some extent with the rain cult of the queen and there
 is little doubt that to this fact one must partly attribute the failure to
 beat *gomana* drums in recent years.

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significance of the fire rite at the accession of a queen can be understood only in the context of the three patterns as they have been integrated into Lovedu culture and become merged in the rite. 783 777

Firstly, fire figures in the borrowed 'transition' rites, but not in the girls' puberty rite (*hloba*). Midway in the sacred fire of the boys' circumcision (*sudiga*) is its central shrine at the place where the chief initiate (*washe*) sits. In the sanctum of the Bird of the *vyali* there is an undying fire. The end of these 'schools' is spoken of as 'a burning down' (*hu ma*): the fire destroys all the distinctive things of the 'school', the lodge, the tables, the tiniest bits of grass that fell from the dancing performers, and, as the lodge burns, the initiates, turning their backs upon it, may not look round and are irrevocably severed from their past. Again, when 'the country is not right' and has to be re-established or purified of its pollution with 'cooling' medicine (*mafugo*), a transition is implied, for it is said, 'The fires are put out to usher in a new year'. The same conception reappears when *mafugo* is used before the accession of a new queen. 372 881 783

Secondly, the firebrand, as the symbol of authority, figures in the warrant (*khise*, i.e. firebrand) given by the queen which authorizes district heads to hold 'schools'. This warrant of authority is most strikingly evident in the firebrand and calabash handed to a disaffected noble or would-be usurper as an intimation that he is expelled from the country. It has merged with the *mafugo* rite enacted to render the earth receptive to the power of rain magic or to herald the accession of a queen; and here it takes the form of a 'royal tax' vicariously exacted through the women, their husbands, the boys sprinkling the medicine, and the keeper of the *mafugo* at the capital. 372 643 651

Thirdly, 'beating out' of fires with 'cooling' medicine belongs to a complex of rites for counteracting the harmful effects of 'heat', a conception explained in Chapter XII. 'Heat' not only arises from the contamination of death, but is the concomitant of disease, weakens the charms (*ditshagula*), impedes rain, and dries the earth. In all these cases it is combated with 'cooling' medicine, as we describe elsewhere. In addition, the *goma* drums are prevented from losing their concentrated power by the 'cool' river stones in them, witches are thwarted by protective charms (*ditshagula*) in which the medicine of the powerful elements, and the 'heat' of the ancestors' anger is 'cooled' with *mafugo*. The death of a queen 'dries up' or 'beats' the whole country, which has to be cooled as a preparation for the new ruler. 372 781

Thus in the fire rite at a queen's accession, the culture is handling complicated and all-important conceptions. The pervasive evil corrupting the country must be neutralised; the relationship of ruler and ruled, superior and inferior, must be visibly reasserted; and there must be enacted a momentous new start marking the inception of a new destiny and preparing the universe for the reception of the next rain-maker. The fire rite on this occasion symbolizes a mighty purification and 'transition', epitomizes the allegiance of subjects and the authority of the queen, and inaugurates a cosmic order in which the magic of a new rain-maker may be auspiciously manifested. That, in the Lovedu cultural context, is the meaning of the fire rite. 372 783

THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSVAAL SOTHO

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tion. There is no trace whatever in the Lowveld of the Tswana ward. Lowveld tribes are totemic, but the totem is neither exogamous nor bound up with any single lineage group. People of the same totem are often not related at all and the lineage group cuts right across the tribe, relatives from the same place of origin and with the same totem often being found in several different tribes. Indeed, the tribe consists only of a small nucleus of members of the ruling family after which it is named, the greater portion being accretions from any and every neighbouring tribe. Thus the majority of members of the Narene are not Narene at all; they are Lobedu, Khaha, Phalaborwa, Kwena, Tokwa, and others who have joined the Narene at various times; and so it is with all Lowveld tribes. 613

FORMAL EDUCATION. The tribes of the Lowveld have five initiation schools; two, known as *khobu* and *hyale*, for girls, three, *badika*, *boxwera*, and *amama*, for boys. These schools are not peculiar to the Lowveld; all of them are found also among Sotho tribes of the Highveld of the Northern Transvaal while some, like the *badika* or circumcision, have a very wide distribution in South Africa. But the *hyale* and *boxwera* in our area have a typical form, not found elsewhere, being held at the same time, while the *amama* appears in its strongest and most characteristic form among Phalaborwa, Khaha, and Narene in the south of our area where, most probably, it had its origin for it is absent from Pediland. 881 • 794

Khobu is the private initiation and seclusion of a girl at or shortly after reaching puberty when she is taught the things she should know and do as a woman. The *badika* or circumcision school is too well known to merit attention here, but the *boxwera*, for boys, which in Sekukuniland and other parts of the Northern Transvaal is a ^{Q. A. J. J.} *boxwera* in the Lowveld is linked with and held together with the *hyale* girls' school, the central feature of which is a wonderful 'bird' in a special enclosure which appears on moonlight nights and dances and speaks in a whistle.¹ The true significance of the *amama* has not yet been

¹ In late years these schools have been languishing or dying out in the northern portion of our culture area. The Lobedu have held neither *hyale* nor *amama* for 50 years, while their last circumcision was in 1919. In the south of the area, on the other hand, all the schools are still in full swing, the Letsewale having held their last *badika* in 1934 and *hyale* in 1936.

§ [See 2: Krige and Krige for further information on Lovedu cults - A]

881 established. Sometimes a school in which boys receive cuts on either
794 side of the face, it is associated also with rain ritual and with the *dajana*
or ancestral spirits who come to earth and speak in a whistling, wailing
manner.

794 An interesting feature of the Northern Transvaal is the tendency
for private people, strangers from tribes who have certain schools, to
set up schools with the permission of the chiefs in areas where they
are not known. People are always willing to join them, and they are
a source of great profit to the holder. Thus the Dikxale of the High-
veld have no *komana*; but a Narene man who has come to live in the
area has brought *komana* drums and holds schools to which many
Dikxale go.

836 SEX MORALITY AND MARRIAGE. Sex morality among Lowveld
tribes conforms to the general pattern found over South Africa in
837 having pre-marital sex intercourse as an institution fully approved of
by society as long as no children are born. Furthermore, adultery,
which is an everyday occurrence, is not looked upon as serious in any
way unless the parties are indiscreet and are discovered. Widows,
especially, are recognized as easy prey to male advances even though
[684] they have been inherited by the husband's brother. The fine attached
to adultery is usually one head of cattle; but the general laxness is
better illustrated in the attitude found among the Narene, where there
is no fine attached to adultery, though a man caught in the act will
[695] send something to the husband to beg pardon. In court, the bare
word of a woman accusing a man of adultery is always accepted.
[684] Seduction of a young girl is a much more serious offence than adultery,
with the correspondingly higher fine attached to it of two head of
cattle. This is great, and realization that marriage is much more than
a sexual relationship between the parties concerned is shown in the
fact that far from trying to promote marriage between the parties
concerned, the parents of the girl will refuse any alliance with a boy
whose people they do not consider suitable.

582 Like all Sotho peoples, the Lowveld tribes have the institution of
[71] preferred marriage with certain relatives, in contrast to the Zulu-
Xhosa with whom marriage with any related person is taboo. Fully
40 per cent. of all marriages are, in our Lowveld area, with the

783 cooled with rain-medicine. The polluted corpse (called *pukudi*, the opposite
789 of *fuga*) is thought of as thrusting up an arm and waving it about to disperse
the rain.

643 It is the duty of the queen each year to *thea* or 'establish' the season propi-
821 tiously for her people. Certain district heads who are close relatives of the
queen have rainpots which they revitalize every year with medicine from
the queen and stir them up at the queen's command to ensure a propitious
season. In the old days the year was 'established' also by the beating of the
sacred drums (*gomana*) and a visit to the royal ancestor graves, but this has
fallen into disuse.

643 If there is drought or if the rain does not come at its appropriate time,
821 people say the queen has not changed the year properly and steps are taken
to approach her. Royal relatives may approach her personally or complain
789 in her hearing that she is killing her people by withholding rain; district
heads may formally pay homage (*hu lova*) with gifts of £1 or a head of cattle,
731 or may bring a troupe of dancers to please her and invoke her pity at the
spectacle of people dancing when they should be hoeing. The songs (*lesugu*)
are associated with offerings to the ancestors and with rain. If these efforts
are of no avail diviners are consulted to determine the cause of drought—
the rain-charms may have been 'weakened' or evil practices of witches may
have prevented rain. In 1937 the people were told at a tribal gathering to
report lightning 'sent' by witches, and shortly afterwards, when lightning
had struck a tree near a village, boys were sent to sprinkle every house in
the area with *mufugo* to 'cool' the lightning. Witches may also disperse rain
by hanging up medicated branches which sway in the air. If it is an ancestor
that is 'holding the queen's hands' he or she has to be propitiated by the
sacrifice of a black beast or sheep on the grave.

643 When winds frustrate the efforts of the queen to make rain, especially
784 when a gale disperses auspicious black clouds, people come to condole with
821 her as if she had lost a relative, and it is taboo to work in the fields the next
day, just as it is on the day after the first rain of the season and on certain
other occasions.

643 The queen is 'Transformer of the Clouds', the changer of the seasons, and
821 guarantor of their cyclic regularity, but she can exercise her powers auspici-
ously only in certain conditions and in 'agreement with the ancestors'.

Digoma

778 The fourth category of forces by which nature is regulated in the interests
794 of man consists of *digoma* which are associated more especially with changes
in the status of man. A *goma* is primarily a drum, but as an abstract concept
● 881 it is particularly identified with the power concentrated in the drum cult.
This cult includes the large complex of institutions connected with rites of
transition, of which the year-long *eyali-rubura* (fertility cult) is one. A
goma is thought of as something mystical and secret, awesome and esoteric.
The circumcision 'school' for boys is called a *goma* which is said to 'bite'

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the initiates. It is something mystically powerful which transforms boys into men. But if the initiation as a whole is a *goma*, so also are the secret formulae, objects, and mummeries that form part of the ceremony.

With the *vyali-vuhwera* fertility cult, which is at the same time also an initiation for girls (*vyali*) and for boys (*vuhwera*), are associated many *digoma*, in the form of masked figures in costumes made of grass, reeds, and leaves, or plays and mummeries emphasizing the value of certain foods. But the greatest of all is *Khiudogane*, Bird of Muhale (the royal founder ancestor), ruling spirit of the *vyali*, which is believed to emerge from a pool on moonlight nights, leave mists behind it when it departs, and upon which much of the ritual centres. It is the link between two aspects of sacred forces, that conceived as mysterious, fearful, approached only through elaborate symbolism, and that represented by ancestors and directly approached. For the bird is both a great *goma* and a symbol of the royal ancestors.

Revived in 1938, after an interval of twenty years, the *vyali-vuhwera* with its great *digoma* is thought to promote abundance and rain, the welfare and happiness of the people. While it lasts it is the main national interest to which all energies are bent and all activities subordinated. Marriages are held up, the normal judicial machinery is at a standstill, and anything that might compete with the ceremonial is interdicted. Since initiates spend only early mornings and evenings at the secret enclosure, they sleep at home and are able to carry on essential domestic tasks for the greater part of the day.

The sacred drums of the tribe (*digoma*), four in number, are kept and cared for by the people of Ravothata, a lineage that came from Phalavorwa, where the drum cult is more intimately connected with the chief than among the Lovedu. These drums, which are said to contain under the resonator a human skull and, in the case of the smallest, the facial skin of a councillor, are mystically linked with the life of the queen and the welfare of the tribe. The *hain* or the smallest drum which during drought the rain ritual and it must accompany the queen if ever she is forced to flee from her enemies. The sacred drums are spoken of as *madimo* (gods) as well as *digoma*, and they were beaten twice a year in the old days in a ceremony known as *gomana* as an appeal to the ancestors for rain and to thank them for the harvest. The latter took the form of an initiation into the secrets of the cult at which boys were given certain cuts on their faces.

Associated with the sacred drums and also classed as *digoma* are the *umidajani*, the weird whistling ancestor spirits of the royal lineage who come to earth in the guise, it is said, of half-men with one eye, one arm, and one leg, to take part in the rites connected with the sacred drums and in the annual harvest *thugula* ceremony in all royal and certain other lineages. They are, in fact, as is known to those initiated in the *gomana*, old men masquerading as spirits. They appear in the bush near the village and join in the singing of *lesaga* songs which are sung, on these occasions, through specially constructed secret whistles.

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171 The *gomana* drums are no longer used by the queen to appeal to the
 778 ancestors for rain, but she permits boys from the royal village to attend
 881 *gomana* initiation ceremonies held occasionally, with her permission, by an
 outsider. The *gomana* concept, despite the support it gives to the mystical
 attributes of the queen, appears to represent a conceptual pattern that is
 autonomous and more fully developed in some neighbouring tribes, where
 the moments of the agricultural year were signalized by the sounding of the
 drums which were thought to bring rain and fertility, to bless the crops and
 cattle, and to safeguard the country from disease and enemies. In some
 tribes today the cult is a recent innovation in the form of initiation schools
 managed by outsiders who have their own drums and *zwidajani* visitors
 from tribes where the cult is better known.

Evil and how to avoid it

761 It has been shown that the Lovedu conceive the order of nature as
 772 something essentially man-controlled through the power of medicine and
 821 magic (*evunaga*), through the ancestors, through the divinity and powers of
 the queen, and through the mysterious forces associated with *digama*. The
 seasons and the rain have to be established by the queen for the crops to
 prosper; the baby 'grows by medicines' which guard it from harm and
 sickness and imbue it with health and strength; adulthood is achieved
 through initiations and *digama*; and over and above all, there is the watchful
 care of the gods. The natural order accordingly can and must be manipu-
 lated by utilizing benevolent and nullifying malignant forces, in order to
 further man's good fortune or to prevent evil from befalling him.

772 The Lovedu have elaborated some interesting concepts of impersonal
 811 evil powers which are concentrations of forces brought about by certain
 821 concatenations of conditions or events. These concepts are found over a
 much wider area, but have received special emphasis among the Lovedu.
 To them the ultimate good is rain. Rain is regarded as not merely the
 material source of life and happiness and the physical basis of man's sense
 of security; it is also a symbol of spiritual well-being and a manifestation
 that the social order is operating smoothly. Hence *coolaba* denotes a state
 of euphoria: man and matter to be in order and to function properly have
 to be kept cool; angry ancestors must be cooled by means of medicine; even
 witches can be cooled and so made to forget their evil purposes. On the
 other hand, heat as the antithesis of the main basis of man's security, the
 cooling, life-giving rain, is conceived as a destructive force leading to a
 state of dysphoria.

753 'Heat' is a concept suggested by the physical properties of heat; it may
 772 sometimes be sensed, for example, as an important factor in fever, one of
 811 the most prevalent illnesses. But actually its operation is inferred from con-
 821 ditions of which 'heat' is clearly the cause, such as droughts and the desic-
 cation of the crops. Here the generation of heat is ascribed to the effect upon
 the earth of disturbances of the regular course of nature by the burial in it